



## ***Ensuring Environmental Compliance in Disaster Recovery***

### **Environmental Responsibilities**

[www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/index.shtm)

*FEMA is responsible for ensuring that disaster response and recovery efforts comply with Federal environmental laws and executive orders, protect people, and do not cause additional damage to the environment. FEMA provides guidance to local, State, and Federal partners on environmental requirements related to disaster response and recovery operations, such as selecting temporary housing sites, debris management, and reconstruction of infrastructure.*

**Temporary Housing** – FEMA works to ensure that temporary housing for displaced individuals and families is located in areas conducive to public health and safety, and that the housing won't cause undue harm to the environment. FEMA visits proposed housing sites to assess potential threats to public health and safety, such as hazardous waste or hazards that may have developed as a result of the disaster. FEMA also assesses the impact of the housing on the environment. Site inspections are conducted as the planning proceeds, so as not to delay delivery of this vital service. The public also has an opportunity to provide input. Environmental assessments for various housing proposals are posted to <http://www.fema.gov/plan/ehp/envdocuments/index.shtm>.

**Debris Removal** – FEMA ensures that debris management operations comply with State and Federal Clean Air Act requirements. Hazardous materials are segregated and disposed of in federally regulated landfills. Non-hazardous debris is recycled whenever possible. Debris from building demolitions that cannot be recycled is transported to construction landfills. Debris consisting of trees and vegetation is chipped for mulch or burned in incinerators.

**Environmental Justice** – Executive Order #12898 requires that Federal actions not have disproportionately high, adverse effects on minority and low-income populations. Of particular concern is the potential exposure to toxic materials, unclean water, or unhealthy conditions.

**Emergency Operations** – Emergency provisions in most environmental laws and regulations allow FEMA to deliver timely disaster response while still complying with the law or regulation. Such laws include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and the Clean Air Act (CAA)

**Floodplain Management** – Executive Order #11988 on Floodplain Management requires Federal agencies to carefully consider the ramifications of taking actions in the 100-year floodplain. Under the Executive Order, FEMA must consider practical alternatives to actions that are in, or may have an adverse impact on the floodplain. Where there are no practicable alternatives to these actions, FEMA must prepare mitigation measures and seek public involvement before proceeding.

#### **FEMA environmental specialists**

FEMA assigns an Environmental/Historic Preservation Advisor to each of the Joint Field Offices (JFO) to oversee compliance with Federal environmental laws and regulations during recovery operations. Each JFO is supported by a team of environmental specialists in the areas of hazardous materials, endangered species, wetlands, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).